

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

AID-05 PC-01 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /088 W

-----109579 251709Z /43

R 251422Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1360

INFO AMCONSUL BELIZE

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 4088

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, MPOL, ECON, HO

SUBJ: DETAILS OF MELGAR'S REMOVAL

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 3792, (B) TEGUCIGALPA 3771, (C) TEGUCIGALPA

3744

1. SUMMARY: EVENTS SURROUNDING GENERAL MELGAR'S DEPARTURE HAVE BEEN WIDELY REPORTED IN THE MEDIA. EMBASSY BELIEVES FOLLOWING RESUME WILL BE USEFUL FOR DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION. SEVERAL QUESTIONS AS TO THE DYNAMICS OF MELGAR'S REMOVAL ARE ANSWERED AND THE REASONS THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL FELT IMPELLED TO ACT BECOME SOMEWHAT CLEARER. MELGAR WAS REMOVED FOR A VARIETY OF FACTORS, BUT THE PREDOMINANT REASON WAS INCREASING SUPERIOR COUNCIL DIS-TRUST OF HIS POLITICAL PRETENSIONS, INDEPENDENT OF THE MILITARY. END SUMMARY.

2. BY MID-JULY THE ARMED FORCES SUPERIOR COUNCIL (SC) WAS MEET-ING BECAUSE OF ITS CONCERN OVER SEVERAL DEVELOPMENTS. THE AREAS
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OF CONCERN HAVE NOT BEEN WELL EXPLAINED TO THE PUBLIC BY GOH SPOKESMEN AND ARE UNLIKELY TO BE. THEY CENTER ON THE GROWING FEELING THAT GENERAL MELGAR'S POLITICAL POSTURE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY INDEPENDENT OF THE ARMED FORCES. UNCERTAINTY WAS FED BY THE STRIDENT PRESS CAMPAIGN ALLEGING MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN HONDURAS' NARCOTICS SCANDAL. PERSONAL AMBITIONS NO DOUBT ALSO PLAYED THEIR PART, AS WELL AS SC COMPLAINTS ABOUT SEVERAL OF

THE MINISTRIES, AND INTERNAL MILITARY POLITICKING.

3. ON SUNDAY, JULY 18, A COMMITTEE MET WITH MELGAR AT HIS HOME AND PRESENTED HIM A WRITTEN LIST OF DEMANDS SIGNED BY ALL MEMBERS OF THE SC. MELGAR MET FORMALLY THE NEXT DAY WITH THE SC AND TURNED DOWN ITS DEMANDS. AMONG OTHER REASONS, MELGAR TOLD THE SC THAT WHEN HE ACCEPTED THE POSITION OF CHIEF OF STATE, HE WAS ALSO GIVEN AUTHORITY TO NAME AND REMOVE THE CABINET AND CIVIL ADMINISTRATION. AT THE SAME TIME, HE REPORTEDLY TOLD THE SC HE WAS NO LONGER INTERESTED IN BECOMING CONSTITUTIONAL PRESIDENT AND IF THE ARMED FORCES WANTED A MILITARY CANDIDATE THEY SHOULD LOOK FOR ANOTHER PERSON.

4. THE CHANGES ASKED BY THE SC ARE WIDELY REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN THE DISMISSALS OF CIVILIAN ADVISERS CESAR BATRES AND GUILERMO BUESO; MILITARY ADVISERS COL. JOSE JORGE SOLORZANO AND LT. COL. CARLOS AGUIRRE; SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT SALOMON JIMENIZE CASTRO; THE MINISTERS OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, FINANCE, GOVERNMENT, INFORMATION, AND PLANNING; AS WELL AS THE HEADS OF THE AUTONOMOUS STATE AGENCIES: THE PORT AUTHORITY, HONDUTEL, CONADI, COHDEFOR, AND COHBANA. CLOSURE OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL WAS ALSO DEMANDED. MELGAR WAS ALLEGEDLY GIVEN A LIST OF PERSONS WHO SHOULD BE APPOINTED IN THEIR PLACE. AS IT TURNED OUT, OF THE 16 NAMED ABOVE, 14 LEFT ALTHOUGH SOME WERE REPLACED BY THEIR DEPUTIES. THE ADVISORY COUNCIL HAS BEEN CLOSED.

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5. AMONG THE REASONS WICH DAILY "TIEMPO" REPORTED GIVEN FOR THESE CHANGES WERE: "BATRES HAD STRONG TIES WITH PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND POPULISM" (COMMENT: THIS CONTRADICTION REFERS TO HIS LAW FIRM AND HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, GUATAMA FONSECA); "BUESO RESISTED SUPPORTING THE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF THE ARMY AND FOLLOWED A NEGATIVE POLICY TOWARDS SOME PRIVATE BANKING INSTITUTIONS; THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION WAS UNABLE TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS PRESENTED BY COMMUNISTS; THE MINISTER OF HEALTH HAD PERMITTED COMMUNIST INFILTRATION; THE MANAGER OF COHDEFOR HAD PERMITTED LOGGING IN THE VALLEY OF ANGELS (A TOURIST RESERVE AREA)..."

6. FACED WITH THESE DEMANDS, MELGAR ATTEMPTED TO RESOLVE THE IMPASSE, BUT ON HIS OWN TERMS. HE VISITED SOME OF THE LT.COLS., AS WELL AS SEEKING THE SUPPORT OF NUMEROUS PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS (TEGUCIGALPA 3597). ON AUGUST 7 THE SC MET AGAIN, DETERMINED IT HAD TO REMOVE MELGAR, AND DID SO. A DELEGATION, LED BY CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL MARIO CHINCHILLO, ASKED HIS RESIGNATION. MELGAR REFUSED, WAS TOLD OF HIS REMOVAV AND REMINDED HE REMAINED ON ACTIVE DUTY AND THIS NOT ABLE TO MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

7. COMMENT: THIS VERSION OF EVENTS (WHICH ORIGINATES IN LARGE PART FROM CIVILIANS WHO LEFT THE GOVERNMENT WITH MELGAR) HAS

BEEN GENERALLY CONFIRMED OR AT LEAST ACCEPTED, BY MOST POLITICAL
OBSERVIES N THIS SMALL P
PITAL. IT ANSWERS THE IMMEDIATE QUESTION
OF WHY MELGAR WAS REMOVED, I.E., BECAUSE HE WOULDN'T AGREE TO
ARMED FORCES SUPERIOR COUNCIL DEMANDS FOR THE HEADS OF HIS
CLOSEST COLLABORATORS AND OTHERS. IT DOES NOT PROVIDE AN EXPLAN-
ATION OF WHY THE SC FBQT IMPELLED TO MAKE THESE DEMANDS NOR HAS
THIS BEEN PUBLICLY ADDRESSED BY GOH SPOKESMEN.

8. THE MAJOR CONCERN SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN MELGAR'S APPARENT IN-
CREASING INDEPENDENCE OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL AND ITS GROWING
SUSPICION OF HIS ADVISERS. HIS EFFORTS TO GARNER CIVILIAN SUP-
PORT AND HIS APPROACHES TO INDIVIDUAL MILITARY OFFICERS PROBABLY
CONVINCED THE SC THAT IT MUST ACT SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.
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OTHER FACTORS THAT PLAYED A PART WERE THE SC'S CONDERN OVER THE
NARCOTICS SCANDAL AND THE STRIDENT PRESS CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTING TO
ITS DETERIORATING PUBLIC IMMAGE. THIS CHANGE HAS, FOR THE MOMENT,
EFFECTIVELY DIVERTED PUBLIC ATTENTION FROM THE NARCOTICS SCANDAL
AND FURTHER CALLS FOR INVESTIGATIONS OF OFFICERS.

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R 251422Z AUG 78
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 4088

9. MELGAR ENJOYED A GENERAL POPULARITY, AND WAS WIDELY CONSIDERED TO BE THE ARMED FORCES CHOSEN CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY. HIS (AND HIS ADVISERS') ZSIC MISTAKE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN AN ASSUMPTION THAT THIS COULD BE TRANSLATED INTO A POWER BASE INDEPENDENT OF THE ARMED FORCES. THERE ARE OTHER IMPORTANT SECTORS IN HONDURAS, BUT WHEN IT CAME TO DETERMINING MELGAR'S FATE ONLY ONE CENTER OF POWER COUNTED, THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL.
JARAMILLO

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